

MANAGEMENT COMMENTS

Operation Evaluation of Support for the Digitisation of Customs Procedures in Moldova

4 February 2025

Executive Summary

Management welcomes the recognition that the project aligns well with the Bank's Country Strategy for Moldova, Moldova's national digital strategy, and the SCF priority to accelerate the digital transition, and that there was excellent collaboration between the project stakeholders, including the Moldovan Customs Service, CCI, UNCTAD, the Bank and the EBRD-supported Economic Council Secretariat (which the report notes provides an additional layer of quality assurance for the project, as well as facilitating extensive stakeholder consultation on behalf of the project).

Management would embrace, as discussed with the IEVD, wider discussions on digital and broader conclusions around the Bank's Digital Approach as a part of the thematic evaluation on the Digital Approach at EBRD by IEVD later in 2025. The wider thematic evaluation will help inform future directions of the Digital Approach 2026-2030, rather than the presentation of an assessment of one single digital project (among many possible and diverse examples) that was designed before the launch of the Bank's Digital Approach and is still under completion, meaning it is too early to assess longer term impact and results. This would have allowed for more efficient discussions with the Board members.

Management does not agree with the project's Implementation Efficiency rating being evaluated as "below standard". This rating also seemingly fails to take into account the wider context in which the project was being implemented, with Moldova significantly impacted by an energy crisis (2021) and invasion of neighbouring Ukraine by Russia (2022). These external shocks have had a significant impact on the Moldovan government's operational and implementation capacity, hence the decision in the project to implement the assignments with a phased approach to avoid over-burdening the Customs Service (CSRM) – Section 4.1 refers.

Management does not concur with IEVD's overall assessment of the achievement of outputs from the TC assignments in the project being only "Standard" (para 49). Management believes:

- it is likely too early to assess some of the long-term outcomes of the project, which is only now close to completion. We will aim to share the available data and any preliminary insights that could better inform this assessment in due course.
- the e-ATA Carnets project should be excluded from this project evaluation, as it was a separate project and not part of UNCTAD's scope of work - mixing results from the two different projects in this evaluation could be misleading.
- Now reaching the end of this project (January 2025), we can confidently state that all activities outlined in the Contribution Agreement with UNCTAD have been executed in a timely and professional manner. The project has not only achieved its defined goals but has also delivered outputs exceeding initial expectations.